

Building Long-Term Customer Relationships Through Honesty

There's an old legend that says that when George Washington was a little boy, he cut down a cherry tree against his father's will. When confronted about it, he confessed, saying, "I cannot tell a lie." The story highlights the value of honesty, even if it means you're getting yourself into trouble by being honest. Unfortunately, this quality seems to be rather lacking in the world of Internet marketing. I can't even begin to tell you how many people have written in before buying a product of mine to ask whether or not it's a scam. Why would they write in to ask that? Because they've been burned by so many empty promises and even outright lies about how to make a living online. They don't know me, and so to them I'm probably "just another Internet marketing scammer." That's why you need to be completely up-front and honest with the people on your list. One way you can do this is by giving honest reviews of products that have come out. Instead of just sending out the canned emails offered by the product owners, take the time to actually use the product and review what you liked and did not like about it. When writing product reviews, don't be afraid to point out the flaws. Short term you will probably lose sales by doing this, but by being honest you will win the trust of your list. People will know that when you send out an email, you're not just trying to make a quick buck -- you'll really tell them like it is. Then, when a really outstanding product comes out, and you have nothing but good things to say about it, those same people who have already learned to trust you will believe you, and will be more likely to buy. As an example, I recently sent out a review of Michael Cheney's traffic videos. In my review I pointed out what I felt were the flaws of the product, even though overall it is a solid offer. That same day, I got a few emails from people who's list I'm on, all raving about how wonderful the product is. Now I'm sure those people who wrote rave reviews made more as affiliates than I did, but did they win the trust of their readers? When those readers buy and see the flaws of the product -- flaws that the list owner failed to point out -- will they ever trust that list owner's recommendation again? Also, letting people know the negatives of a product won't necessarily dissuade them from purchasing, especially if you do think the product is genuinely useful and make that known to them. It does, however, prepare them for the flaws, since they know about them ahead of time. This actually helps people be happier with the product, since they didn't go into the purchase expecting something that they did not receive. Again, using Michael Cheney's traffic videos as an example: I pointed out in my review that the videos were rather wordy and long, but still contained valuable information. Had I not made that known, someone on my list might have bought the product and then gotten irritated with the wordiness of the videos - maybe even demanding a refund. But that same customer, having already known about that flaw, might say to himself, "these videos are rather wordy, like Jon said" -- but they would not be upset about it, since they were told ahead of time and chose to purchase anyway. Yes, being honest with your list members is a much better way to build a long-term relationship with them. Treat your online business like a real business -- one that you want to last for years and years to come. Don't waste your emails to them promoting every "next big thing" with canned emails that only praise the products. That doesn't earn trust. Being up-front and honest sets you apart from the crowd of bogus marketers out there. It shows your list members that they can trust you, and that will pay off much better in the end.

About the Author

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